13/10

Depot Town Rag

Volume 13, Number 10 *"All the news in one block in one month."*

100% FREE Rag content

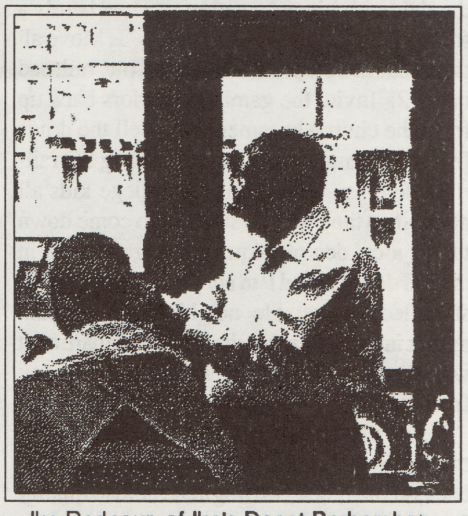
October 1990

- **Caboosterism**
- **Revival!**
- **Cycle Club**
- Children's **Hallowe'en Party,** 6pm October 31 in the Freighthouse

. . . and other strictly local stuff

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Depot People: Ike



Ike Rednour, of Ike's Depot Barbershop, has seen it all from his front window.

New regime brings back an old ethic - - merchants in charge of the block once again

Merchants take over DTA offices

September's annual election of Depot Town Association officers saw three business owners take the top three responsibilities for the coming year:

- **Bill French was elected DTA president,** following in the footsteps of his brother, Jerry, who was the founding president of the Association in 1976. Bill and his wife, Sandee, are the owners of Aubree's Saloon, a railroad tavern since the 1870's and formerly the Alibi Bar, which was owned by Bill and Jerry's father. Bill's sister, Linda, is co-owner of the Sidetrack Bar and Depot Exchange Antiques across the street.

- Past president, **Paul Fetters,** accepted the post of **vice president** and pledges to continue the service and leadership which he exhibited in the past year. Owner of River Artworks at 48 East Cross, Paul has been doing business in the district for ten years.

- **Treasurer, Sally Richie**, owns the Newel Block with husband, Rex, and operates The Occasion Station, an ice cream parlor and gift shop. Sally and Rex held offices in the Association years ago and are excited about their return to active status.

- **Secretary, Tom Dodd**, the only non-business owner among the new officers, owns the Masonic Block where he and Bettie live. He is a teacher in Ann Arbor and has edited *The Depot Town Rag* for nearly 13 years. He continues to be the block's minister of propaganda.

Depot Town-where the parking is easy

-- in fact, people are coming back to park and walk and visit and just watch the street/sidewalk traffic again!

Anyone who has trekked from the nether reaches of of a consumer mall's vast expanse of asphalt to the hermetically sealed confines of Plasti City knows how really practical the old ways are. Take Depot Town's parking system, for instance:

• No metered' advance fines' along these streets. When the sidewalks went in, the parking meters came out -- and merchants covet those premium spaces for their loyal customers by parking around in the back. (26)

• Two-hour limits throughout most of the district permits plenty of shopping and eating-time and discourages folks from leaving their autos here while they take a cab to the airport for a two week vacation. (0)

• The lot between Frog Island and the Freighthouse is the most improved lot in town and on Friday night and Saturday morning teems with hundreds of happy neighbors from all over who call Depot Town home. (106)

• The 'coal yard' lot behind the south side buildings is open again and sees hourly turn over with virtually no posted penalties. (26)

• Several private lots have been improved by their owners and cater to their own tenants and customers - Old Town Restaurant (18), The Occasion Station (15), Follett House(13), the Masonic Block (6), Heritage Square (8), Coin & Gold (8), and City Body (50+)each take care of their own -- for their own. There are many neat and tidy garden spots, as well as car-parks behind our blocks of old buildings.

• The triangular City-owned lots next to and behind Aubree's Saloon (10) and the Freighthouse (20) see a constant flow of folks from breakfast time until the saloons close late at night. 15 more spaces snuggle up to the Freighthouse, as well.

All this and a vital business district, too! Where else do the values of a simpler life manifest itself more than in the old communities with the values upon which our society was built? Somehow, smiling at the driver of the nearby car in the mall just doesn't seem to be appreciated in the same way. (326+)

'Crazy Barb' not so crazy

When Barbara Coleman & her daughter, Sheila Stabile, decided to replicate their successful paperback book exchange business in Wayne, they looked for a spot with good street traffic, easy parking and a friendly, comfortable neighborhood. They found a handy commercial space in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town and introduced her concept during the August Heritage Festival. A Grand Opening followed in September and they'll pass for old friends by now.

Crazy Barb's Too, Paperback Book Exchange, 50 East Cross, is a mother/daughter venture, with husbands, kids and grandkids helping out by building shelves, stacking books, lettering signs and helping area readers turn in their old books for new stuff to read.

Exchanges get 70 cents plus tax, trades without purchase ask 1/2 the original price. To buy new releases, you must trade new or pay 30% off the original price.

Another plea for centralized corruption

A new kind of *cycle club* for Depot Town?

We sat in on one of the committee sessions at the local merchants' meeting the other day while the chair of the Hotel and Prostitution Bureau made his presentation. "We're taking a beating on this issue," Mr. Hustle was telling those assembled, with the hope of influencing the choice of a new City Manager.

"You mean you can get a beating, too?" queried one of the candidates.

"No. Well, ah, er, I'm not sure; sometimes there's violence, but I'm talking about the bad press our hookers are getting for just doing their job."

"You've got to admit," said the second candidate, "they're the City's first front when it comes to ambassadorships."

"And," said the third, "you ought to get better looking hookers if they're going to speak for your city. If I am selected, I'll see to it!"

"Yeah," replied Hustle, "you guys all sound so liberal when you're trying out for the job, but once you're sitting behind that desk, you'll probably succumb to the complaints of ordinary citizens and start shooing our representatives off the streets and into the parking lots again. You can expect some trouble over that 'waving ordinance,' too."

The first candidate seemed troubled. "What's the waving ordinance?" he asked, embarrassed at his ignorance of local customs.

"Oh, this town is famous for that one," said another candidate. "We've heard about that all over the country in the City Management Biz. You can get busted for waving your hand at a passing car. It's now against the law for hookers to wave down their johns. Isn't that how it works?"

"Yes," said Hustle. "But that's just a symptom of the problem. With today's decentralized smut, drug dealers and hookers have to get out there in the traffic all over town to let their clientele know where they're operating from on any particular day."

"Isn't this a historic district?" asked the candidate from Akron. "Why don't you have a Red Light District — a Tenderloin — where all this action used to take place in the Good Old Days? Seems that kind of authenticity would fit in just right here. You could make it a highlight of your annual Heritage Festival with ten percent off the top to help support the overhead costs."

"And," said another candidate, "you'd know exactly where the action was taking place. Why, the City could even regulate it; maybe charge a use tax in the process. You're creative; I'd think you folks at the Bureau could exploit that to everyone's advantage."

"If I'm elected," said the final candidate, "I'd get the crime out of the posh neighborhoods and back down into the railroad district where it belongs. That's the foundation upon which this great nation was built. As it is, nobody knows where to look for 'action'."

"Hoo boy! Are you guys out of touch. Our railroad district is so sanitized that the 'riff raff' of yesterday is no longer welcome down there. It doesn't even qualify as a depressed area any more. You can't even get a tax break or a grant for a promotion in that posh neighborhood. I'm afraid that would never work here again."

"Well, then," asked the Akron man, "where do they carry on all this illicit activity? Is there a new Skid Row in town?"

"You're not going to believe this: It's right on the main corner between all the downtown churches," was the Bureau rep's reply. "Between services, funerals and weddings. It's a disgrace. But down at the depot, it's another story. We can't even get a good crap game going on in one of the railroad bars these days. Everybody's playing billiards and wearing snappy looking sports togs. It seems that once the trains stopped stopping, the seedy traffic moved out."

Seeking to garner the attention of the interview committee, one of the candidates carried the day with his proposition: "Then here's a four-point plan for a New Day — 1. Move all the prostitutes upstairs over the old railroad bars, 2. Invite the gambling parlors back up from the church basements, 3. Sell the drugs from one central street corner among the railroad taverns, 4. And tell the college kids all about it so they will be sure not to come down to this local den of iniquity. It sure worked in the old days . . . and I'm sure the folks up in the so-called respectable neighborhoods would appreciate it. Maybe the Police Department would, too, as long as it wouldn't take away from their current responsibilities."

"Hey!" piped up one of the radicals from the district in question, "If we had all that crime back on the block, we might be able to qualify for some more grants and tax breaks again. Why, it would just be another cycle for the old railroad district. Nothing lasts forever. It just comes around again!"

"You may be onto something," said the Bureau Chief to the managerial candidate. "What the heck? Nobody lasts very long in the City Manager business, anyway."

[With apologies to Art Buchwald. -ed]

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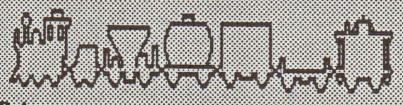
What's next for the old district down by the station?

Depot Town generation-by-generation:

1830	1850	1870	1910	1930	1950	1970	1990	2010
Origin		**Good Old Days**		**Bad Old Days**	**Renaissance**	**Post-Renaissance**		
First addition to City	2nd downtown			WWII ends	Antiques		Bus tours	
New buildings	Depot is center			Trains don't stop	Victorian Xmas		Businesses sold	
Railroad	New businesses			Businesses fail	Boomer Days		and upgraded	
Secede and return	Stores full			Empty storefronts	Home Tours		Ice cream, billiards	
Commercial/transportation center				Spurned by estab.	Monthly paper		and antiques	
Pioneer mentality	Establishment mentality				Heritage Festival		Jazz continues	
				Skid row mentality	Caboose arrives		The establishment	
					Jazz tradition		is *us!*	
					Businesses profit		Underdog	
				Establishment alarmed			mentality wins	
					Preservation mentality			



Prime movers:
Builders *Merchants & Fraternal Clubs* *Motorcycle Clubs* *Promoters* *Merchants*

. . . and through much of it, Standard Printing, City Body, Miller Motors, Aubree's (Alibi) persevered!

Welcome to the future. As the caboose motto states:

"Firmly rooted in the past, with a clear view forward."

Saturday, December 1

Victorian Holiday plans promise a full day of seasonal activities

No sooner was the 1990 Heritage Fest out of the way, than district businesses began to make plans for this year's Victorian Holiday -- which will kick offthe first Saturday in December.

A mid-morning parade is planned, which will bring Santa to the old neighborhood, and carriage rides, open houses, roasted almonds on the street, Victorian hair jewelry demonstrations, Victorian baking contest, a raffle, decorative greens, concerts, and more . . . are planned for the annual kick-off event.

Sally Richie has been ciruculating the planfulness up and down the block to ensure the second biggest event of the year.

The Case of the Misplaced Garbage

- from an astute neighborhood observer

Our own bearded Depot Yard Sherlock Holmes traced a bag of trash from his garbage can back to a nearby ice cream parlor last week and confronted the manager. The manager claimed to have hired a person to take out the trash to his restaurant dumpster — but new employee chose not to walk that far and used the *detective's* garbage can, instead.

When Sherlock was asked how he knew where the garbage came from — as we have three ice cream parlors in the block — Depot Yard's Holmes replied, "Evidence, my dear Doctor Watson! Evidence."

Under cover of darkness, the bag of garbage was removed to its proper dumpster. Case number 0001 CLOSED!

[Editor's note: As more district dumpsters have been moved farther back from the front entrances and more businesses and residents continue to sort their trash into recycleable categories, Sherlock's investigations have been taken up by an ever-growing number of aware citizens.]

Support *The Rag's* loyal sponsors

Regular readers of *The Depot Town Rag* will recognize many of our old sponsors and a goodly number of new ones with this issue. Their support has made this little monthly publication possible for the past thriteen years. Let them know you appreciate it.

Neighborhood businesses are encouraged to make contact with Rex Richie via The Occasion Station (ice cream parlor) to place and/or pay for the $10-a-month loyaties. It's good for business and good for the block. Thanks.

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The Depot Town Association, Inc. August, 1990

(Early publication of the September issue places this report a month later)

In the cool breezes of the Market Plaza. . .

The minutes of the July meeting were approved as published.

Treasurer reports Frog Island totals still outstanding, $1194.85 in Heritage Jazz fund, more than $900 coming in to the Rag fund, electric bill outstanding, with $1899.21 in the General Fund. $148 for cornice light bulbs will come from the General Fund.

Budget & Events:

- The Ark reports great losses from Frog Island, says DTA could have made "lots of money" on an ice cream concession, new contract talks will begin in September.

- Heritage Jazz Competition is ready to kick-off tomorrow. Andy Dahlke group cancelled, was replaced the same day by a band from Flint.

- Great Train race expects more than 400 runners, needs volunteers for Sunday morning.

Jerry Meadows and Lynda Hummel are preparing slides of Ypsilanti activities and environs for the Michigan Tourists Bureau. More are solicited.

Insurance: New policies for Liquor Liability, PL & PD for Heritage Fest will be $2700, down from previous $4800!

Dumpsters next to RR tracks are finally moved to less conspicuous locations - except the grease pit, which will be covered for the Festival.

Banners for light poles are still being investigated. No report this month.

Interns may soon be provided (program and personnel) via EMU's Department of Marketing. Paul Fetters will meet with Rod Ludlow in September to arrange a working agreement.

NIFTY (New Initiative For Tourism in Ypsilanti):

No action, yet, on repainting the pink caboose on the Follett House sign.

Crazy Barb's Too, a paperback magazine exchange, is opening at 50 East Cross.

Rag Report:

The editor has received a letter of complaint regarding the August article on progress at the depot. A reply was sent, seeking permission to publish the criticsm.

Jazz insert to the 12-page August issue will be assembled at the Jazz Tent all weekend.

The September issue is at the printers' and will be circulated the last day of Heritage Festival.

Other business:

President Paul's Priorities for the year were reviewed and published with this issue.

Fashion Show profits of $250 will go toward a Cable TV ad with Cable representatives soliciting support of business and owners for the remainder of the cost.

Jerry Tillman reported taking Heritage brochures to various local places which were overlooked, notes they are out of Depot Town info. "It's time to make a new promotional brochure."

The pipe fitters convention brought many to Depot Town, but they could not find their way back the last day, with streets closed early for Heritage Fest.

September meeting: annual elections and a presentation from Kent Brown of the SBC, CBC and Chamber of Commerce.

Vice President Quayle stopped in Ypsilanti for a sandwich today, but could not get into Depot Town with closed streets.

Heritage Fest's kick-off party drew the interest of the group away from further business.

Best Yet Award: to WEMU's Linda Yohn, Auburee's Bill & Sandee French, Sidetrack's Linda French, and all their numerous committees who helped to bring the Jazz Competition back to the block.

The Golden Goose Award: to discriminatory practices anywhere.

Heritage Fest wrapped-up, called success

More than a dozen Depot People showed up at the tables in front of Aubree's on the Thursday morning following Heritage Festival in August to assess the successes of the recent event. Friday events were much improved, the Jitterbug Contest was a gala premiere event, Jazz returned triumphantly, the Brass Bed Raffle netted $350, and the old block's layout looked much better than in recent years.

Thanks were offered to the many who volunteered to make the exciting events possible. Waitpersons from the Old Town covered their expanded duties and still found time to tend bar at the Jazz Tent. Merchants showed up before and after opening hours to assemble the stage, clean the tables, line up the stanchions around antique cars. Area saloons ran the Jazz bar *and* the Rubber Ducky Race. Businesses donated prizes and other amenities for the Antique Auto hospitality center in The Old Caboose and Depot Towners did their very best to host a great weekend for thousands - nay, *hundreds* - of thousands of visitors to this old block. But it's never enough. Plans are already underway to make next year's even better!

October 1990

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

Development Authority (DDA)
7:30 p.m. Thursday, 10/11
Freighthouse Coffeeshop

Association
7:30 p.m. Thursday, 10/18
The Old Caboose

Antique Engine Club
7:00 p.m. Thursday, 10/25
Freighthouse Coffeeshop

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.

-Tom Dodd, editor

The Depot Town Association, Inc.
William French, president
c/o The Old Caboose
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Caboose fixin's improve Plaza

Late summer saw Newel Block's Rex Richie replacing the south deck on the 100+ year old DTA caboose in the Market Plaza. It's so authentic, even the Historic District Commission would approve -- if they had authority over such ancient *vehicles*, too!

Vehicle or edifice, The Old Caboose could still use some loving care: One of the cupola windows frames needs rebuilding and glazing and mounting. Any takers?

Rex's ministrations to this venerable, old meeting place are much appreciated.

The Caboose is available for rentals again at $25 per event plus a $10 refundable key deposit. Just call Gary McKeever at 483-4256 to make your reserv ation.

Song of the caboose

I roll along upon the rails
Hooked to the lengthy freights,
No matter what the day avails,
With long delays and waits,
The crew that rides me o'er the line
Through sunshine, snow and rain,
Consists of willing men as fine
As ever ran a train.

I jog along o'er highest grades,
I take the sharpest curves;
And when the daylight softly fades
A tail light always serves.
Sometimes the long train hits a spot
That makes me roughly ride;
But when a journal box runs hot
It's greatly stings my pride.

Upon my floor there rests a stove
That keeps my comrades warm:
No matter where my train may rove
These boys defy a storm.
They come to me with frozen ears
Through riding out on top;
And that's the time the warm stove cheers,
While tales the trainmen swap.

They sometimes hook me to a string
Of cars, box, coal and flat;
And as my wheels revolve and ring
The crew on guard stands pat.
And when the nights are dark and still
I hear the engine toot,
As 'round the curves and up a hill
It runs with loud salute.

I am a jolly fine caboose,
Smooth o'er the high grades pitch:
When freight runs light they turn me loose
And drive me in a switch.
But when the freight is running brisk
My wheels turn night and day.
The engine pulls me with a whisk,
And guides me on my way.

- A. W. Munkittrick

[Wanda's wonderful world of words: I'm glad this is going to be a 'color' column because I wear a coat of many colors — just like the cat in the Bible named Joseph — and I will attempt to reach as many of my multi-colored brothers and sisters as I can with the written word and the spoken blessing. - Wanda Spieser]

Saturday morning revival - a day at the Market

Is a 'revival' the only kind of 'survival?' Before you holler 'uncle' why not try the most reviving food ... which can be found at the Farmers' Market — a veritable showcase of good eating — golden oranges, juicy apples as big as softballs, bananas that remind you of Harry Belafonte's 'bah-nah-nah" boat, extra-large brown eggs (that have a richer yolk and a harder shell), crunchy-munchy stuff that's usually green, and Oh!, the cheeses sitting there awaiting your crackers! My most reminiscing food is the fresh-squeezed orange juice at the Market, as I remember my Polish mother squeezing our day's supply of vitamins, even during Depression Days, if we could afford it. Orange juice was the only form of sugar that we ever got. When times picked up, I remember my father making root beer at home in tiny brown bottles and then stashing them under the porch in the sand. (Whoever heard of refrigeration?) Ah, the days of O.J. and root beer! We felt very affluent! And now we're told that back then we lived in 'poverty.' Oh yeah? Check out my universal type-O blood (no sugar in it), my curly hair, and my original teeth, not to mention unbroken bones. Nowadays we are told that "You are what you eat." Think about your own roots, and then think about all the ills modern man is heir to — like sugar diabetes, plugged arteries, gout, AIDS (eek!), etc. I think there is a message in this for all of us ... it's "survival of the fittest." If we help our health along, the payoff lives in our genes for generations. Try the bursting nutrition at the Farmers' Market and remember what Mae West used to say - "Beulah, peel me a grape." Even she knew the value of fruit.

As I approached the Frieghthouse this A.M., I noticed tracks in the gloamin'. As I squinted I wondered: Are they bear tracks or deer tracks? Just then a speeding train ran over them and my myopic stare got "back on track" and I was all ready for some fun.

Things inside were bustling as everyone got into a business-like atmosphere. The 1st Class Fare corner was a-bubble with the heavenly smell of gourmet coffee; Irene-the-Queen was bustling around her tiny kitchen getting ready for the hot dog, bagles-and-cream cheese, blueberry muffins, and chocolate brownies crowd. And there I was, pen in hand, notebook at the ready, waiting for my first victim to come into view so that I could start a cracker barrel kind of sharing with so many nice folks gathered in this cozy place. Relaxation was the order of the day and we all 'chilled out.'

Somewhere it says: "Depot Town *is* what America *was* . . . Smiles and waves, friendly faces, pleases and thank yous . . . " Today, Saturday the 14th of July, Depot Town was PEOPLE as far as the eye could stretch. A congenial crowd was sipping coffee and listening to Keith Jablonski (Irish lad!), git with his guitar and some good music. Keith is 35 and blind, and hails from Detroit and other parts, and now owns and runs a recording studio in Ypsilanti (you can reach him at 482-5882), where he records groups, singers, soloists and instruments — maybe even tap dancers . His little girl, Emily, tags along to help.

I bumped into Mama-San Dodd just outside, in a whisper of rain. Lorna, who is a sharp 81 (must've had razor soup for lunch) said that her son, Tom, talks a lot (she doesn't know *me* yet) and, pointing to her "hubby," said that she had a "hobby!" Mrs. Dodd and I agreed that hypochondria is a nice way to pass the time if you don't play bingo or make love. (God bless the older types!).

And just then Loren, the printer, sashayed by, minus his pooch, who once tried to steal my turkey sandwich. It was 18 minutes past twelve and "thar she blew" — the speeding Amtrak bullet, getting the little people all excited as they ran to watch her. A smiling Italian signora, Mrs. Messina, Sr., subbed for her son with the eggs, breads, and cheeses of every description and aroma. (Another excellent health food.) In Irene's tiny "refleshment" cubicle, was Rosemary Soja, a pseudo-Pole. Her husband is the one with the passport from the Auld Sod. She is some other nationality "sister" and is just as nice as anybody. She's also good-looking.

Just passin' through was Mary Jane Booms, minding her own business and looking like a Woman With A Mission. The door kept swinging open and shut and, in a wink, Country Ken dashed out, followed by a pretty lady with a pretty parasol.

Near the wrap-up of the day, Keith and one other of our "sisters," Louise, serenaded us with the ever-inspiring "Amazing Grace." Then the crowd dispersed, the produce was put away, and I dragged home a heavy load of healthy and tasty foods to nibble on as I type this for *The Rag*. Although I am a long way from short of words, (!), I'll try someone else's:

"A funeral marched down the street,
His body was diminished.
He drank a quart of pure shellac -
And sure had one fine finish!"

I'm gone! I love ya! -Wanda Spieser

RAGTIME

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• Evening & Career Wear
• Alterations
• Patterns created
482-2010
27 E. Cross
Tues-Fri 10 am -6 pm
Sat 10 am - 5 pm
Evenings by appt.
EUROPEAN DRESSMAKERS